THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) During the current financial year upto January 1997, the Indian rupee depreciated, on an average, by about 0.41 per cent per month against the US Dollar and by about 1.22 per cent against the pound Sterling. On the other hand, the rupee appreciated against the Japanese Yen, the Deutsche Mark and the Franch Franc by about 0.66 per cent, 0.37 per cent and 0.26 per cent per month, respectively during the same period.

(b) The exchange rate of the rupee is market determined. The foreign exchange market is monitored closely by the RBI and steps are taken, as and when necessary, to counter speculative pressures against the rupee and to maintain orderly foreign exchange market condition. The Foreign exchange market has behaved in an orderly fashion in 1996-97 so far.

Letters Received From M.Ps

12. SHRI RAMSAGAR. Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to refer to the reply given to Unstarred Question No. 507 dated November 22, 1996 regarding "replies to letters of Members of Parliament" and state:

(a) whether the information asked for has since been collected;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the number of further letters received from Members of Parliament on the affairs of banks from November 22, 1996 till date; and

(d) how many out of them are pending for replies?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) and (b). Yes Sir. As per available information the number of letters received from Hon'ble Members of Parliament during the period from January 1,1996 to November 22, 1996 ar as follows:

	No. of letters received	No. of letters disposed off	No. of letters pending
Government of India	1728	1237	491
Reserve Bank of India	39	32	7

(c) and (d) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Import of Raw Rubber

13. SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN : Will the MInister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the estimated domestic production and demand of raw rubber in the country during 1997;

(b) whether there is any proposal to import raw rubber during 1997; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH). (a) The estimated domestic production and demand of raw rubber in the country during 1997-98 are 5,85,000 MTs and 6,19,000 MTs respectively.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

Frauds in Banks

14. SHRI MANGAL RAM PREMI : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of instances that have come to the notice of the Government where the officers in the private and public sector banks have cleared/ passed the cheques containing bogus signatures and also have issued the cheque books on forged/ fake documents and have contravened the laid down banking norms during the last six months; and

(b) the action taken against the officers involved in such transactions bank-wise ?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) and (b) Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have reported that the present system of data collection in RBI does not generate information in the manner asked for in the Question. However, RBI recently collected information from Vysya Bank Ltd. regarding cheques with bogus signatures cleared/passed for payment and cheque books issued on forget/fake documents at their Delhi branches. It was reported that during the period from 1.6.1994 to 16.1.1996, five cheque books were issued on the basis of xeroxed copy/fake requisition slips. 23 cheques with bogus signatures were passed for payment/transfer during the period from 2.6.1994 to 14.6.1996. Three officers were awarded punishment of withholding one increment. Show cause notices have been issued by the bank to other concerned officials.

Financial Institutions

15. SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are awere of the problems being faced by the financial institutions in the country;

(b) whether the financial institutions have requested the Government to allow them to collect deposits like the

scheduled commercial banks; and

(c) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) to (c) Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has informed that it has permitted select all-India Financial Institutions (FIs) raise resources by way of term money borrowings, certificates of deposit and term deposits. However, some of the FIs have been approaching the RBI from time to time, for increase in the limits for raising resources through these instruments. RBI has not found it feasible to accede to such requests from FIs.

Applications for Loans in Orissa

16. SHRI BHAKTA CHARAN DAS : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of applications for loan received from small scale industries by the Public Sector Banks in Orissa during the last three years and the amount sanctioned in that regard;

(b) whether banks are not providing timely loans to the applicants as a result of which these industries turned sick; and

(c) if so, the remedial action the Government propose to take in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) The data reporting system of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) does not generate information in the manner asked for. However, based on the returns submitted to RBI by the scheduled commercial banks, the number of sick small scale industrial (SSI) units and the outstanding credit in respect of these units in the State of Orissa as at the end of March, 1993 March 1994 and March 1995 was as under :

(Rs crores)

	Number of Sick SSI units	Outstanding Amount
As on 31st March, 1993	13930	70.79
As on 31st March, 1994	17235	74.50
As on 31st March, 1995	20498	68.99

(b) and (c). RBI has issued instructions to all scheduled commercial banks that applications upto to a credit limit of Rs. 25,000/- should be disposed of within a fortnight and those for over Rs. 25,000/- within 8-9 weeks from the date of receipt of application. Banks have also been advised that requests for increases in credit limits shoiuld be considered expeditiously and decision taken promptly and in any case within six weeks.

Dues against NTC

17. SHRI RAM NAIK : Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) the outstanding dues as on January 31, 1997 payable by the National Textile Corporation to all State Governments State-wise;

(b) the reasons for non-payment of dues in full;

(c) whether any time bound programme has been made to pay all dues in full; and

(d) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI R.L. JALAPPA) (a) to (d)The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Removal of Import Restrictions under WTO

18. SHRI SHANTILAL PARSOTAMDAS PATEL : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have recently removed import restrictions on a number of items as part of its agreement with World Trade Organisation;

(b) if so, the details thereof ; and

(c) the impact on the indigenous industries dealing with liberalised items?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) to (c) As a part of the on-going process of liberalisation of the import regime under the Export and Import Policy 1992-97, through the Ministry of Commerce's Notification No 23 (RE-96)/92-97 dated 10 February 1997, quantitative restrictions on products which span 70 eight digit tariff lines have been eliminated, and in respect of products which span 98 eight digit tariff lines the restrictions on imports were relaxed through the placement of such products under the Special Import Licence list. These items include office machines and equipment, air conditioning units, cosmetics, perfumes, and glassware, as well as parts and components used in the manufacture of specified consumer goods. It is too early to assess the impact of these measures on indigenous industry.

Items put under OGL from Special Import Licence

19. SHRI DINSHA PATEL : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have recently shifted a number of items from Special Import Licence list to the Open General Licence (OGL) and from restricted list to the Special Import Licence list;

(b) if so, the details thereof, item-wise and the approximate duty the Government are likely to earn annually; and

(c) the impact on indigenous industries due to this change?